

SOME FORGOTTEN LIBERTARIANS

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While Stalinism was a problem in the East, he believed that in the West the problem was the regimentation of life due to uncontrollable political authority. This authority arose in response to a "form of egalitarianism peculiar to industrial societies", by which he probably meant consumerism and the Welfare State. His solution to this problem? Decentralization of political and economic power to the small group.

Contemporary anarchists and libertarians have yet to catch up to Chiaromonte. Rather than lambasting critics, he was quite moderate and balanced in his arguments because he "did not believe in eliminating realities." Thus, he truly understood Proudhon, unlike contemporary anarchists such as George Woodcock who saw Proudhon's moderation as a symptom of inconsistency or "semi-anarchism". Chiaromonte was well aware of the complexity of life, rejecting the notion that one must have a large all-encompassing theory and must attempt to explain everything. The left had been shaped by the view that history was meaningful and could be controlled, but history was a "mass of infinitesimal accidents." He was the first post-modern anarchist, essentially beyond "right" and "left". Chiaromonte saw the 20th Century as plagued by ideology and its blind destructive rages and felt it the task of intellectuals to critique ideologies, not develop new ones.

Chiaromonte's writings include "The Paradox of History" and in POLITICS, "On the Kind of Socialism Called Scientific" (Feb. 1946) and "Social Law, After Proudhon" (Jan. 1945)

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The articles with an asterisk were originally published in FREEDOM. "Joseph Dietzgen and Anarchism" formed part of the introduction to the 1984 Red Lion Press edition of "The Nature of Human Brain Work".

THOMAS SPENCE AND AGRARIANISM

Thomas Spence (1750-1814) was a self-taught schoolmaster from the Tyneside who spent his entire life promoting the idea that land should be owned communally. Government was to be radically decentralized, with each land-holding community virtually autonomous. In Saxon times, according to Spence, land had been owned by the people, but was stolen by the Normans who introduced feudal tenure. Workers had to take back what was rightfully theirs. His ideas came from three sources, the Bible (his family were Calvinist dissenters) John Locke and Thomas Harrington.

From the Bible came his language and metaphors, his morality and sense of justice. Following Locke, he believed in "the inalienable right of property in one's life" and that in a natural economy the worker would receive all the value he produced. From Harrington came the people's right to bear arms within a citizen's militia and the necessity of engaging in armed resistance to tyranny.

He thought joint-stock companies good examples to follow for his projected agricultural communities. Each villager would become a voting member and shareholder. In spite of his rural emphasis, Spence was not anti-industrial. Large scale non-agricultural production was to be carried out by co-operatives. His agrarianism was not reactionary but was a means to fight capitalism. He, and all his followers including the Chartists, believed workers' communal ownership of land would guarantee full employment and independence, thus alleviating the competition which caused low wages.

The Spenceans could not simply be dismissed as utopians. Remnants of communal lands still existed in the 18th Century and there was a long history of opposition to the Enclosure Acts. Agrarian communalism was based upon this background of continuity and tradition. Nor were people far removed from rural life. In all cities but the Metropolis, workers were a short walk from the countryside. And they went there in droves, to picnic, to poach and to glean, much to the landowners' displeasure.

Spence was a member of the London Corresponding Society until its dissolution and he had his own followers as well. These gathered in taverns and the meetings were known as "Free and Easy's", which gives an idea of the sort of man he was. His movement was as decentralized as his concept of government. Spence also engaged in propaganda - pamphlets, broadsheets, songs, and graffiti. He issued a newspaper called "A Pennyworth of Pig's Meat". He engraved radical slogans on coin of the realm and issued thousands of pieces of his own token money. One of these showed a pig dancing on a crown and crozier - a satiric attack on both the State and Established Church.

After his death, the movement split in two. One group was composed

libertarian society, for such a society would be impervious to the leader-cult, have little experience in passive obedience and therefore difficult to manipulate and mobilize. *Now, a society in which the principle of self-government has been applied...is a society which, for purely military purposes is probably decidedly inefficient.*

Libertarian socialism was not some foreign concept brought from outside by an enlightened elite, but existed in embryonic form within society. It would be only necessary to generalize these aspects of mutual aid, decentralism and federalism. *Co-operatives and mixed concerns (municipal and state-funded but autonomous institutions) already exist and work extremely well. To extend their numbers would not seem a revolutionary act...not provoke the violent opposition which men feel toward projects involving an entirely new principle. In its effects, however, the act would be revolutionary...The intrinsic compatibility of the co-operative enterprise and mixed concern with...self government constitutes yet another other reason for the preference.*

Perhaps Huxley was influenced by the Guild Socialists who had some prominence in intellectual circles during his youth. Guild Socialism was a kind of gentlemanly anarcho-syndicalism invented in part by G.D.H. Cole. Cole was a dissident Fabian, disgusted with the authoritarianism of the Webbs and company, and decided to head off in a libertarian direction. This ideology never got much hearing from workers, but certain intellectuals who were never tempted by Leninism or Fascism, such as Bertrand Russell were attracted to it. Interestingly enough, the Catholic radicals, Chesterton and Belloc also developed their own form of Guild Socialism.

NB. Hyacinthe Dubreuil's book, *A Chacun Sa Chance*, a call for industrial-self government. All quotes taken from "Decentralization And Self-government", a chapter of ENDS AND MEANS, Huxley's 1937 pacifist work.

NICOLA CHIAROMONTE

Nicola Chiaromonte (d. 1959), an Italian-American writer and activist influenced by the thinking of Plato, Tolstoy and Proudhon. Was a member of a group including Mary MacArthy and Dwight MacDonald, was the "mentor" of the former and wrote for MacDonald's magazine, POLITICS. Chiaromonte and POLITICS were in many ways the fore-runners of the American New Left. (That is, the New Left before it Stalinized)

A staunch anti-Stalinist at a time when most intellectuals were entranced by the despot, he also developed an advanced critique of Marxism, going beyond the usual "Marx was not a nice man therefore his theories were wrong" position, which tended to predominate in anti-marxist circles. Chiaromonte showed how Marx's ideas were unscientific and utopian.

showed certain sympathies toward anarchism *...in so far as it serves as the instrument by which the ruling class preserves its privileges; in so far as it is a device for enabling paranoiacs to satisfy their lust for power...the state is obviously worthy of abolition.* But his understanding of anarchism was limited, being equated with complete individualism, therefore he opted for a form of libertarian socialism. But few anarchists would disagree with the necessity of co-ordination of activities, the question is how they are co-ordinated. *In complex societies like our own the state has certain other and more useful functions ... there must be some organization responsible for co-ordinating the activities of the various constituent groups...If the word state is too unpleasantly associated with ideas of domestic oppression and foreign war...let us call the necessary social machinery by some other name.*

Huxley wanted to break state power down into self-managed units, but did not opt for violence, his was to be a pacifist and gradual revolution. *So far as the state is concerned, the desirable context for reform is decentralization and self-government all around. The desirable methods for enacting reform are the methods of non-violence.* An important application of self-government would be at the level of the work place. Few anarchists have more bluntly characterized the authoritarianism of capitalist industry. *Under the present dispensation the great majority of factories are petty despotisms...Even where benevolence prevails, passive obedience is demanded of the workers, who are ruled by overseers, not of their election, but appointed from above. In theory they may be the subjects of a democratic state; but in practice...the subjects of a petty tyrant. Dubreuil's scheme ...would introduce genuine democracy into the factory. By means of comparatively small changes in the existing systems of local and professional organization it would be possible to make almost every individual a member of some self-governing group.*

But industrial self-management was not enough, the community too, must be made up of small-self-governing units. Huxley saw that such a system could only work in the context of the breaking of state power. Where a dictatorship existed such decentralization could only lead to the worst sort of totalitarianism, as we have seen with the Committees For the Defense of the Revolution in Cuba. *...in Japan cities were...divided into wards of about a hundred inhabitants apiece. The people in each ward accepted a measure of liability for one and other and to some extent were responsible for good behavior...within their own small group. That such a system lends itself to the most monstrous abuses under a dictatorial government is obvious... It remains in any case a device worth considering by those who aspire to impose a communal pattern upon the atomistic, irresponsible life of modern city dwellers.*

Huxley realized that the key to peace was the development of a

of the "physical force" men who earlier supported the United Irishmen and the United Englishmen. Several rifle companies were organized. Spenceans were involved both the Cato Street Conspiracy and the Cold Bath Fields affair. For the first two decades of the 19th Century, they were the most militant of all the radical movements.

With the defeat of the militants after Cato Street, the non-violent Spenceans prevailed. They favored education and creating land and industrial co-operatives. The term "Owenite" has been used too loosely to describe the co-operative experiments which flourished in the 1830's and 40's. Many, if not most of these, were Spencean, or at least a synthesis of Spence and Owen. (The difference being the emphasis Spence put on agrarian communalism) The Agrarians propagandized for "spade husbandry", an early form of intensive horticulture. Like Kropotkin sixty years later, they knew a small amount of well tilled land could be highly productive and that such productivity allowed for individual and communal autonomy.

The British Association for Promoting Co-operative Knowledge, a Spencean group, was formed in 1829 and more than 500 societies were under its umbrella by 1832. Some of these succeeded in buying land and others developed co-operative industries. George Petrie of the Grand National Trade Union was a Spencean and promoted agrarian ideas among the trade unionists. These ideas were well received by workers. Nor was Spence's influence limited to the British Isles. Contemporary journalists saw American agrarianism (the Free Soilers) as merely a transplanted form of British agrarianism and Chartism.

Spence's thought permeated the Chartist Movement. Bronterre O'Brien called for land for workers in his *National Reformer*. Fergus O'Connor and George Harney both supported agrarianism. A Chartist Land Plan developed in 1843 had 70,000 members subscribing to its land-purchasing fund. The lasting outcome of the Spencean agrarians was the Freehold Land Movement of the 1850's from which developed many building societies.

The countryside of Great Britain is still largely the preserve of titled parasites as it was 160 years ago. Isn't it time for a Thomas Spence revival?

For those readers interested in Spence, I recommend THE PEOPLE'S FARM by Malcolm Chase.

ROBERT OWEN AND ANARCHISM

Robert Owen is usually written up in the history books as a founder of the socialist movement, by which the authors usually mean the Labour Party or social democracy. Perhaps this is the reason he is not in anarchist anthologies or placed in the anarchist "pantheon".

Who was Owen influenced by, changing him from a precocious young industrialist to the most famous radical of his time? - None other than William Godwin. It was from Godwin he learned how environment effects the individual and the dangers of authority and statism. His New Lanark experiment follows logically from these readings. Owen was also radicalized by his failure to convince his fellow capitalists that workers should be treated like human beings. From this experience developed his application of Ricardo's labour theory of value to the situation of the working class. Thus arose his "Labour Exchange" which abolished money and based exchange upon labour-time notes - years in advance of the American anarchist Josiah Warren's famed "Time Store". Next came the idea of the co-operative. Owen did not invent the co-op, the first dating from 1760, a flour mill organized by Chatham dockers, but what he did was turn this idea into a *social movement*.

The emphasis on co-operation gave rise to a following among the workers and Owen became interested in their trade unions and friendly societies. In 1818 John Doherty, an Owenite, attempted to unite all Manchester trades in one union and a number of years later formed the "National Association" - the first attempt at One Big Union. In 1834 Owen formed his own OBU, the "Grand National Consolidated" and began to prepare for the general strike to usher in the co-operative commonwealth. Thus, six years before Proudhon wrote "What Is Property?" we have almost the entire anarchist program laid out by Owen and his friends - abolition of money, co-operative production, mutual aid, syndicalism and the general strike. It should also be noticed that the American anarchist, Josiah Warren got many of his ideas from Owen and was also a member of the Owenite community of New Harmony.

Marxists dismiss Owen as a utopian socialist, but most of his proposals, like those of the equally maligned Proudhon, are very practical - witness the present day co-op movement. True, Owen's claim that socialism could be introduced within five months of the general strike was utopian in the extreme. But then that great anti-utopian, Karl Marx thought capitalism was on its last legs in 1848, which is like confusing a week old fetus with a man of 90.

Somehow I just can't see Robert Owen getting along with the likes of Sydney and Beatrice Webb or Ramsey Macdonald. If he must be lumped in with British socialists, surely his spiritual heirs are such heterodox and

friends, the murdered Haymarket anarchists.

Dietzgen is not important just for his heroism, but for his philosophy. He developed a distinctly libertarian epistemology (theory of knowledge) completely at variance with the dominant absolutist and Positivist trend of the times. While anti-absolutist, this philosophy did not fall into the nihilist trap of ultra-relativism, such as we find with "Post-Modern" thinking where everything is reduced to mere subjectivism.

Dietzgen's philosophical writings were in "THE POPULAR OUTCOME OF PHILOSOPHY and SOME OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS, published in 1906 by Charles H. Kerr. In 1984 THE NATURE OF HUMAN BRAIN WORK was reprinted by Red Lion Press, but is out of print. A pamphlet on Dietzgen's thinking - COSMIC DIALECTICS - is available, however.

SILVIO GESELL

Gesell (1862-1930) was a German businessman influenced by the thinking of Proudhon and Henry George. He radicalized George's "single tax" concept into community land ownership. No one was to own the land outright but to occupy it on a usufruct basis with a long-term lease. These nominal lease payments were to pay for community services, thus eliminating the need for taxes. From Proudhon, he took anti-statism, a critique of interest and a belief in free markets. His solution to the interest problem was the introduction of demurrage money - money which depreciated in value forcing it to be spent as quickly as possible and therefore keeping the economy in motion. It would also reduce interest to almost nothing since hoarding would be impossible.

Gesell was Minister of Finance in the short-lived Bavarian Soviet of 1918 and was a friend of Gustav Landauer. His best known work is the two volume NATURAL ECONOMIC ORDER. An Introduction to Gesell's ideas can be found in "Capitalism Is Not Free Enterprise" by Hans Feldt, available from Red Lion Press.

Gesell has been forgotten by anarchists - but not all of them. Robert Anton Wilson thinks highly of him, stating, *The only utopian economist I ever liked was Silvio Gesell. Of course, Gesell was a businessman, not an academic or an ideologue, so he had some common sense.* From "Right Where You Are Sitting Now."

ALDOUS HUXLEY, THE LIBERTARIAN

Most intellectuals of the 1920's and '30's rejected the liberalism of their parental generation and embraced one form of totalitarianism or another. Only a small minority sought an alternative to liberalism in anarchism or libertarian socialism. One of that rare breed was Aldous Huxley, who

to workers' cooperatives and mutualism. The Journal Officiel of the Paris Commune stated that *The task of federalisation of the nation must be taken up by a different class: a class that has never been inextricably bound up with principles that would contradict this revolution.* By which, of course, they meant the working class, and as we know, federalism was an important aspect of Proudhon's thinking. The "Proclamation to the People", also in the Journal Officiel developed this idea further. *What are its demands?...The total autonomy of the Commune extended to every township in France...The Commune's autonomy to be restricted only by the right of an equal autonomy for all the other communes that adhere to the contract that will ensure the unity of France...The political unity which Paris strives for is the voluntary union of all local initiative, the free and spontaneous cooperation...*

These writings give the impression that anarchism must have been an important influence upon the Commune, most especially its more radical and proletarian aspects. Their program seems to have included the liberation of women, the federalization and decentralization of the French state and the development of workers' cooperatives and systems of mutual aid. Come to think of it, not such a bad program for today!

JOSEPH DIETZGEN AND ANARCHISM

Joseph Dietzgen was born near Cologne in 1828 and in his youth apprenticed as a tanner, which became his life-long occupation. He participated in the Revolution of 1848 where he came in contact with the writings of Karl Marx and soon became one of his supporters. Marx had a high regard for the Tanner, considering him to be one of the few people to understand his critique of political economy, and even went so far as to mention this in his introduction to CAPITAL. Dietzgen was a frequent contributor to socialist newspapers, particularly VOLKSTAAT, but it was not until 1869 that his first book, THE NATURE OF HUMAN BRAIN WORK was published.

In 1884 he moved to the United States and was made editor of DER SOZIALIST, which he retained until 1886, when he moved to Chicago. That year the anarchist editors of the CHICAGOER ARBEITERZEITUNG were arrested and charged with the Haymarket bombing. In spite of the state terrorism Dietzgen stepped in and took their place, continuing publication of the paper. The Socialist Labor Party, which had been trying to distance itself as much as possible from the Haymarket Martyrs and anarchism, was outraged. But the old tanner could not be moved and even went so far to declare that he too was an anarchist. (This statement made Engels furious.) Two years later, he died of a heart attack and was buried alongside his

libertarian thinkers as William Morris, G.D.H. Cole and George Orwell. We shouldn't let the authoritarian left have Owen - it is an insult to his memory. Move over Godwin and Proudhon, make some room for Robert Owen.

PANARCHY - A Forgotten Idea of 1860

I have no information on the life of P. D. de Puyd. Perhaps John Zube knows more about him. The following article by Max Nettlau appeared in Zube's journal PIOT, but was originally published in Gustav Landauer's DER SOZIALIST. The version below is abridged. For more information on PANARCHY, the journal PIOT and thousands of microfiche on anarchism and libertarianism, write to John Zube, Box 52, Berrima, NSW, 2577 Australia

Down with the State! and "Only upon the ruins of the State..." express the emotions and wishes of many, but it seems only the cool "Opt out of the State" can help them toward their realization. When a new scientific insight appears, then those convinced of it simply proceed on it, without wanting to persuade the old professors who do not intend to follow it. Quite on their own, they will fall behind and dry up. Indeed, in many cases maliciousness and stupidity will put many obstacles in the road of a new idea. That is the reason why hard struggles must be fought for unconditional mutual tolerance. Only from then on will everything proceed automatically, because the necessary foundation for every progress, namely experimental freedom and free research have been achieved. The frequently discussed question: What ought to be done with the reactionaries, who cannot adapt to liberty?" would thereby be simply solved - they retain their State, as long as they want it. But for us it would become unimportant. Over us it would have no more power than the ideas of a sect. Consequently, before the ideas of MUTUAL TOLERANCE in political and social affairs will break its path, we could do nothing better than prepare ourselves for it - by realising it in our own daily living and thinking. How often do we still act contrary to it?

These words are intended to demonstrate how much I have fallen in love with this idea and to make others understand my pleasure to have found a forgotten essay of a pioneer of this idea: the article "*Panarchie*" by P. D. De Puydt in 1860. The author declares himself for *laissez-faire, laissez-passer*. (The Manchester School of free competition without State intervention) From this he concludes that the law of free competition does not only apply to the industrial and commercial relationships, but would have to be brought to its breakthrough in the political sphere.

Do I want to propose my own system? Not at all! I am an advocate of all systems, ie. of all forms of government that find followers; nothing develops

and lasts that is not based upon liberty. Nothing that exists maintains itself and functions successfully except through the free play of all its active components. Otherwise, there will be loss of energy through friction, too many breakages and accidents. Therefore, I demand of each and every element of human society the liberty to associate with others, according to choice, to function only in accordance with his capabilities, in other words, the absolute right to select the political society in which they want to live and to depend only upon it. Today the republican attempts to overthrow the existing form of the State. He is opposed as an enemy by all monarchists and others not interested in his ideal. Instead, according to the idea of the author, one should proceed in a way which corresponds to legal separation or divorce in family relationships. He proposes a similar divorce option for politics, one which would harm no one.

In practice the machinery of the civil registry office would suffice. In each municipality a new office would be opened for the POLITICAL MEMBERSHIP of individuals and GOVERNMENTS. The adults would let themselves be entered according to their discretion. From then on, they remain untouched by governmental systems of others. For the differences that might arise between these organisms, arbitration courts will suffice, as between befriended peoples. There will, probably, be many affairs common to all organisms, which can be settled by mutual agreements, as was, for instance, the relationship between the Swiss cantons. There may be those people who do not wish to fit any of these organisms. They may propagate their ideas and attempt to increase the numbers of their followers until they can pay for what they want to have in their own way. Freedom must be so extensive that it includes the right not to be free. Consequently, clericalism and absolutism for those who do not want it any other way. You are dissatisfied with government? Take another one for yourself - without an insurrection and without any unrest - simply walk into an office for political membership.

Free choice, competition - these will, one day, be the mottoes of the political world. Wouldn't that lead to unbearable chaos? One should remember the time when one throttled each other in religious wars. What became of these deadly hatreds? The progress of the human spirit has swept them away. The religions nowadays co-exist peacefully. Should what was possible in this sphere not likewise be possible in the sphere of politics? Nowadays, while governments only exist under the exclusion of other powers, each party dominates after having thrown down its opponents and the majority suppresses the minority. It is inevitable that the minorities, the suppressed, grumble and intrigue and wait for the moment of revenge, for the finally achieved power. But, when all coercion is abolished, when every adult has at any time a completely free choice for himself, then every fruitless struggle will become impossible.

PROUDHONISTS AND THE PARIS COMMUNE

Karl Marx had almost no followers in the Paris Commune. The Communards who were not simply old time radical Jacobins were Blanquists or Proudhonist anarchists. All this is fairly well known, but how influential were these anarchists and what was their program? One way of answering this question is to read the Commune press, documents and manifestos.

Here is a quotation from a newspaper article published early in the life of the Commune which plainly has a Proudhonist orientation. *The problem which calls out for solution is thus the following: how to guarantee to each individual the property and fruits of his labour...only the industrial and craft mutual association can fulfill this conception.*

But this wasn't the only journal to favor anarchism, for in the Ami du Peuple, an out and out Proudhonist journal, *Pure and simple confiscation of wealth by the State is an expedient of questionable value... a deplorable action since it would revive State despotism and would run counter to the spirit of our revolution - which is to destroy despotism by means of communal freedom... What is needed are reparative measures that conform to the principles of justice by transferring to worker-ownership the wealth hitherto left idle or used wastefully...Only labour would be remunerated since it is the sole source of wealth.* Here very clearly are the ideas of Proudhon; communal liberty, workers' cooperatives, the labour theory of value and opposition to the state.

Nor must we think the espousal of these concepts limited to newspaper articles, as the "Program of the Commune" stated, *The Commune must propose to vote bills guaranteeing railway, canal and mine workers the ownership of their own industries and the advancing of all credit demanded by the workers' associations..*

As for the Central Committee of the Association of Women For The Defense Of Paris, it isn't hard to see where their political sympathies lay, *there is only one way of organizing labour so that the producer is guaranteed the product of his own work and that is by setting up free producer associations which will share out the profits from the various industries.* These women also demanded equal pay for equal work and wanted to set up worker cooperatives for women workers.

There were also a number of trade unions obviously influenced by Proudhonism. The Mechanics and Metal Workers Union demanded *the organization of labour in mutual associations with collective and inalienable capital.* These sentiments were echoed by the Typographers Union who wished to *abolish monopolies and employers through adoption of a system of workers' cooperative associations.*

One mustn't think the anarchist Communards only limited their interests